COVERUPS!

Number 23 | Gary Mack, Editor & Publisher | September, 1985

As President Kennedy's car nears the Triple Underpass with Clint Hill sprawled on the trunk (lower circle), a puff of smoke drifts away from the grassy knoll and breaks into smaller parts (upper circle).

NEW PHOTO EVIDENCE BACKS UP ASSASSINATION WITNESSES

by Gary Mack

A frame from 16mm newsfilm by NBC photographer Dave Weigman may show the mysterious puff of smoke associated with a second gunman in the Kennedy assassination.

The smoke, reported to officers at the scene, drifted out from the picket fence, hung briefly under the trees on the grassy knoll, then dissipated. Five witnesses spotted the smoke immediately after the fatal head shot; over the years at least three others have come forward with similar observations.

"A puff of smoke came out about 6 or 8 feet above the ground right out from under those trees," said Sam Holland to the Warren Commission (6H243-244). After leaving his position on the Triple Underpass directly above Elm, Holland ran behind the picket fence to where the smoke seemed to originate; later that afternoon, he gave the same information in an affidavit to the sheriff's office (24H212).

Researchers have demonstrated beyond any doubt that there was no natural source of smoke anywhere near that area. Warren Commission apologists have incorrectly, perhaps deceitfully, pointed to a steam pipe well over 100 feet away as the likely source, *but no investigation was ever done.*

Some have expressed skepticism in the mistaken belief that rifles do not smoke; however, defective bullets and excess oil in a just-cleaned barrel can, and do, produce smoke. Also, as seen in tv news tapes of guerillas and riots around the world, some rifles do emit a hefty quantity of smoke in various situations.

This new evidence, spotted by researcher Warren Graham of Charlotte, North Carolina, is the second significant frame from the Weigman film. As detailed in Coverups 2 three years ago, a later frame shows what appears to be the front tire of a motorcycle in the south lane of Elm Street. The location and timing are a perfect match for the motorcycle with the open microphone, as measured from the Dallas Police tapes by acoustics expert Dr. James Barger.

The Weigman film has often been overlooked as a source of evidence because much of it is severely blurred. He was in car 7, a convertible, and started filming just before the last shots were fired. He jumped out, ran down Elm and then cut straight up the hill toward the pergola. Only a few frames are clear because his camera was operating nonstop while he ran.

This frame, as timed by researcher Dick Sprague nearly 20 years ago, is 7 seconds after the fatal head

shot. Sprague later gave a copy of the frame and two others to Texas researcher J. Gary Shaw. Graham saw them and spotted the smoke while visiting Shaw this past summer. These blowups are quite representative of the excellent photo work done by researcher Jack White.

There are conflicting reports as to the whereabouts of the original Weigman film. One source said the HSCA found it at NBC News in Los Angeles, while another said it was only an edited, first-generation print. As far as is known, the HSCA did not obtain or study any versions of the Weigman film, nor did the Warren Commission.

Researcher Robert Groden, who has a good print, has offered to analyze adjacent frames to check for movement of the smoke.

FWST 6-27-85

Board takes 3 minutes to deny Sirhan parole

Star-Telegram News Services

SOLEDAD, Calif. — It took just three minutes for California's parole board to kill another bid for parole from Sirhan B. Sirhan, the assassin of Robert F. Kennedy.

In rejecting Sirhan's quest for freedom, however, the board inadvertently left open a microphone that allowed reporters to overhear part of their deliberations — an oversight that could spark a legal challenge to the denial of parole.

Rudolph Castro, who was chairman of the three-member state Board of Prison Terms panel that handled the case Wednesday, had just announced the decision denying parole for the slayer of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy when he was informed that a microphone in the hearing room had been left on during the private discussion.

Because of the large number of reporters interested in the case, news people had been allowed to view Sirhan's appearance via closed circuit television in an adjoining room.

Although the camera was turned off when the board went into executive session to consider the case, someone evidently forgot to disconnect the microphone.

The reporters in the other room listened, intrigued, as the panel swiftly rejected parole for the 41-year-old Sirhan. There was no actual discussion; after three minutes' general conversation, Castro moved to deny parole and the others concurred. Then the panel turned its attention to Sirhan's application for transfer to a prison in Southern California where he could be nearer his family.

The reporters heard the panel decide to grant Sirhan's request for a transfer from Soledad, where he has been for 10 years, to the California Men's Colony at San Luis Obispo to finish serving his life sentence.

"We'll send his ass down there for as long as possible," a member of the panel — whose voice could not be readily identified — was heard to say.

Sirhan returned to his cell after telling reporters: "The best way to settle this case is to deport me. . . . Certainly I'm not going to hijack a plane or take any hostages.

"I'm shocked," Sirhan said. "If this was in some totalitarian country, I could believe it.

"I believe it is an indictment of the American system of justice. It is being perverted by a group of lackeys who are following orders from higher up."

Before the board began its deliberations, Sirhan had said repeatedly that he was sorry for killing Kennedy. Then, with tears in his eyes, he pleaded for freedom.

"I want my liberty so bad; I'm anxious to please you," he said. "So tell me the answer you want to hear and I will give it to you."

But when panelists asked him about the night of June 5, 1968, and the shots that took Kennedy's life, Sirhan insisted he could not remember firing the gun.

"I don't recall," he said repeatedly. "I have no explanation."

When Sirhan goes to the new prison, the panel members speculated, it might be possible to place him in the general population rather than in an isolated protective custody unit as had been the case at Soledad.

Finally, about five minutes into their deliberations, panel members were heard discussing whether the microphone was still on.

"Let's make sure the sound is off," one panel member said.

"That is really important, or the whole world will know," said another.

A moment later, the microphone was switched off.

After another 50 minutes, Castro came out to announce the panel's decisions.

Asked how long it had taken the board to decide on Sirhan's parole, he said the deliberations had lasted for 45 minutes — but fell silent when faced by the news that the reporters had been listening to the whole thing, and the actual discussion had taken just three minutes.

When reporters renewed their questions, Castro replied:

"On advice of counsel, I am curtailing further discussion on this."

David E. Brown, the parole board's legal counsel, also declined comment when newsmen asked him to explain the panel's legal position. But Sirhan's lawyer, Luke McKissack, was more talkative.

"I'm dumbfounded," he said. "I plan to immediately see what legal steps might be taken to set aside the board's action today.

"One thing I do know for certain after listening to a recording of what reporters overheard . . . these three guys did not meaningfully and maturely deliberate their decision. They have put the American justice system on trial."

In an open part of the hearing, before the executive session, Castro called the 1968 assassination "an attack on the democratic system of government (that) with three shots disenfranchised millions of people."

"Sirhan still does not accept the enormity of his crime," Castro added.

Panel members Joseph Aceto and Ray Hauregui joined Castro in suggesting that Sirhan needs to develop a marketable skill and participate in self-help programs to prepare him for future release.

Board members made it clear that they questioned the sincerity of Sirhan's expressions of remorse and doubted his "partial amnesia" about the assassination.

Before starting their deliberations, the board reviewed Sirhan's history both before and after going to prison, including a recent prison psychiatrist's evaluation that he has become "an exemplary prisoner with no predilection toward violence at this time."

They also heard Sirhan tearfully plead for his release to return to his homeland in Jordan. "I am not interested in being a troublemaker anymore," he said.

He repeatedly said he was sorry for killing Kennedy and at the conclusion of his statement said, "I wish it had never occurred, for the Kennedys' sake, and for my own."

This was the seventh parole hearing for Sirhan, and the second since his scheduled 1984 release date was canceled three years ago.

That date had been granted in 1975, but then-Los Angeles County District Attorney John Van de Kamp successfully petitioned the Board of Prison Terms to rescind its action on grounds that it had not properly considered death threats made by Sirhan against a writer and a prison counselor.

Marilyn Monroe's Mysterious Death
The Untold Story

By ANTHONY SUMMERS

Marilyn Monroe's death from a drug overdose came only hours after she was dropped by her lover Robert F. Kennedy. But she didn't die in bed at home, as was publicly reported — she died either in the hospital or on the way there.

Marilyn's body then was returned to her home — and the news of her passing wasn't reported until hours later. The delay was to give Robert Kennedy — who had come to Marilyn's home specifically to tell her their affair was over — time to sneak out of town and thus avert a possible scandal that could have wrecked his career.

That's the startling scenario I've pieced together based on my own extensive investigation into Marilyn's mysterious death on Aug. 5, 1962.

For years, gossips have been saying that Marilyn had an affair with John F. Kennedy. My probe has confirmed that the gossip is correct — and that Marilyn also had an affair with JFK's brother Robert. According to one knowledgeable source, Robert fell madly in love with her.

But in the last months of Marilyn's life, Robert — who was U.S. Attorney General at the time — was confronted by a flood of reports that criminals were hoping to turn the Kennedys' indiscretions to their own advantage.

There were reports that Bobby had been photographed in compromising situations and that his meetings with Marilyn had been bugged. He decided to break off with her.

It wasn't easily done, however. Marilyn nose-dived into despair and proved hard to discard. Hollywood writer Robert Slatzer, who has revealed he once was briefly married to Marilyn, says she even tried to hold on to Bobby by threatening to expose their affair.

During one conversation, Slatzer says, a despondent Marilyn wondered gloomily whether Bobby had stopped seeing her because she was not sufficiently educated. Finally she burst into tears, sobbing that men wanted her "only as a plaything." Kennedy, she supposed, "had got what he wanted."

Former private detective John Dolan, who learned that Marilyn's phone had been bugged, says the wiretappers discovered she had been desperate enough to call the Attorney General at home in Virginia. He had been enraged.

Bobby called on his brother-in-law Peter Lawford — then married to his sister Pat — for assistance. Lawford said he tried to convince Marilyn that her affair with Bobby was over "a couple of days before she died," according to Deborah Gould, who later was briefly married to the actor.

But Marilyn was not easily dropped. "She tried desperately to get in touch with Bobby," Gould told me. "Peter mentioned she made calls to Pat, trying to find out where Bobby was, and found out that he was on the West Coast."

Bobby, who was staying at a ranch 300 miles north of Los Angeles, finally decided to confront Marilyn face-to-face and convince her the affair was over, Gould says.

According to a number of sources, including an eyewitness, Bobby made a hurried flight to Los Angeles on Saturday, Aug. 4, 1962 — the day before Marilyn's death. He drove to her home, where he was seen by a neighbor entering her house in the early afternoon.

After talking with Bobby, "Marilyn knew then that it was over, and she was very distraught and depressed," Gould told me.

At 4:30 that afternoon Marilyn phoned Dr. Ralph Greenson, her friend and psychiatrist. She sounded drugged and depressed, he later said. Searching for solace, Marilyn also called several other friends and associates.

Later that night she called Lawford, according to his ex-wife Deborah Gould.

"Marilyn got on the phone to Peter to inform him that she couldn't take anymore and that it would be best for everybody that she died, and she was going to kill herself," Gould said.

Lawford replied: "Nonsense, Marilyn, pull yourself together — but my God, whatever you do, don't leave any notes behind."

Soon after that call, Marilyn died of a drug overdose. That was the autopsy surgeon's official conclusion. For various reasons — not least of which was that key laboratory specimens were prematurely destroyed — we probably will never know for sure whether she died a deliberate suicide, by accident or at the hands of a killer. There is no doubt, however, that there was a cover-up of the last hours of her life.

Peter Lawford later admitted to Gould that he secretly went to Marilyn's home that night. Gould says Lawford told her he had destroyed a note left by Marilyn "to protect loved ones involved" — namely the Kennedy brothers.

"That's where Peter's role came in," she told me, "to cover up all the dirty work and take care of everything."

Walt Schaefer, the boss of a leading California ambulance company, states with utter certainty that one of his ambulances went to Marilyn's home that night. He said the ambulance "took her to Santa Monica Hospital. She passed away at the hospital. She did not die at home."

Schaefer said he doesn't remember who called the ambulance. He doesn't know who, if anyone, accompanied Marilyn to the hospital.

Swathed in blankets and without makeup, she may not have been recognized by hospital personnel. But I think it is more likely that she died BEFORE arriving in the hospital — putting whoever was with her, perhaps Robert Kennedy himself, in a terrible predicament.

The press believed RFK was 300 miles away at that time, and his unexplained presence in Los Angeles on the night of Marilyn's death would have raised a lot of questions he was desperate to avoid.

There was only one solution: Return her body to her home, and delay reporting her death until Bobby had time to slip out of town.

Only after this was accomplished did Marilyn's housekeeper and companion, Eunice Murray, call for help, my investigation indicates.

Murray first phoned Marilyn's friend and psychiatrist, Dr. Greenson, who lived nearby. He told her to also call another of Marilyn's doctors. But Dr. Greenson got there first — and found Marilyn dead, facedown on the bed, at 3:40 a.m.

Marilyn's body was already stiff, in rigor mortis, when Dr. Greenson found it — and rigor mortis only appears four to six hours after death, which places her death well before midnight, say top medical experts.

Natalie Jacobs, the widow of Marilyn's public relations man Arthur Jacobs, says she's absolutely certain that Arthur received the news of Marilyn's death by 11 p.m. that night and immediately rushed over to her home.

When I reminded Natalie that, according to the police, Marilyn's body had not been discovered until 3:40 a.m., she replied: "Allow me to tell you why. My husband fudged everything — I cannot tell you why."

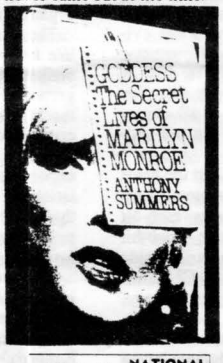
Lawford's ex-wife Deborah Gould told me the delay in calling the doctors and police was used to "get Bobby out of town." She says Lawford told her that Bobby "left by helicopter."

William Woodfield and Joe Hyams — the only two professional journalists who looked seriously into Marilyn's death — discovered that a rented helicopter had been dispatched to Lawford's beach home on the night Marilyn died, and that it had carried a passenger to the main Los Angeles airport. "The booking is a blur in my memory now," says Woodfield, who saw the helicopter's logbook. "But it was definitely in the name of either 'Lawford' or 'Kennedy.'"

Early on the morning after Marilyn's death, I learned, Lawford hired a security man recommended by Hollywood private detective Fred Otash to tie up loose ends in the case — making sure there was no evidence linking Marilyn to the Kennedys. Even FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover had a hand in covering up Marilyn's connection to the Kennedys — ordering the confiscation of phone records covering Marilyn's final days, records that could have linked her to the Kennedys.

The above scenario is a fair construction from the mass of information now available, much of it entirely new, all of it cross-checked and analyzed.

In a real sense, this was Robert Kennedy's Chappaquiddick — but his connection with Marilyn's death never came out at the time.



NATIONAL ENQUIRER

From the forthcoming book, GODDESS: The Secret Lives of Marilyn Monroe by Anthony Summers. Copyright © 1985 by Anthony Summers. To be published by Macmillan Publishing Company. Reprinted by permission of Curtis Brown Associates, Ltd.

A BBC tv special based on Tony's book is being syndicated for showing this year. It includes housekeeper Murray's admission that RFK visited MM a few hours before her death. Some other excerpts and newer interviews will be seen on ABC's 20/20 sometime in October.

24-year-old suicide ruling changed to murder

D'N 8-14-85

By George Kuempel
Austin Bureau of The News

AUSTIN — A state judge ruled Tuesday that a U.S. Agriculture Department official listed as a suicide victim for 24 years actually was murdered, adding a new chapter to a mystery with connections all the way to Lyndon Johnson's vice presidency.

"It seems to me clear that the death of Henry Marshall was not the result of self-inflicted gunshot wounds," State District Judge Peter Lowry ruled after a two-day hearing. He ordered the Texas Department of Health to change Marshall's death certificate to show that he was murdered.

The judge's ruling made no mention of who might have killed Marshall.

Last year, convicted West Texas swindler Billie Sol Estes told a Robertson County grand jury that then-Vice President Lyndon Johnson had ordered Marshall killed. But on Monday, Estes said by telephone from his home in Abilene that the details of Marshall's death are a mystery.

"I think there's still a God in heaven, and I think that God will straighten history out," Estes said. "I've decided that none of us can do it down here."

Former aides to Johnson have bitterly denounced Estes as a "pathological liar" and accused him of making up the story about Johnson to boost sales of a book written by Estes' daughter.

When Lowry issued his ruling from the bench Tuesday, Marshall's widow, Sybil, was momentarily left speechless. She sat down on a courtroom bench weeping, her face buried in her hands.

"It's been a long time," she whispered.

Donald Marshall, 34, the victim's only child, said he was "happy" about the ruling. Marshall, who filed the suit, would not speculate on who killed his father or why. "It doesn't matter at this point," he said.

Retired Texas Ranger Capt. Clint Peoples of Dallas, who spent 23 years investigating Marshall's death and testified Monday, said he was delighted by the ruling, and considers the case closed.

"That man (Henry Marshall) and his family were mishandled more than anyone that I've ever seen in my 55 years of law enforcement," Peoples said.

"There has been strong pressure of all kinds put on everybody to keep that (Marshall's death) from being ruled homicide. Finally, finally justice has been done."

Peoples, 74, declined to say who he thinks killed Marshall. But he said he's "satisified" that Estes' testimony to a 1984 Robertson County grand jury is the truth.

Peoples, who talked Estes into testifying before the grand jury, said he's certain the full story will come out one day.

"It's going to have to be some changing of the guard in some places," he said. "You have to read between the lines."

Henry Marshall, a U.S. Department of Agriculture employee who helped oversee the federal cotton allotment program, was found dead on the family's ranch near Franklin in Central Texas on June 3, 1961. He had five gunshot wounds in his side, cuts on his head and carbon monoxide in his lungs, according to a coroner's report.

A justice of the peace ruled suicide, based on an investigation by Robertson County Sheriff Howard Stegall, who has since died.

A 12-member Robertson County grand jury, which included a son-in-law of the sheriff, launched a six-week investigation a year later in the wake of allegations linking Estes to a fraudulent cotton allotment scheme.

Marshall's body was exhumed and an autopsy performed at that grand jury's request.

Harris County Medical Examiner Dr. Joseph Jachimczyk, who was called in on the case, concluded that Marshall probably was murdered, but could have killed himself.

The 1962 grand jury decided on a split vote that there was insignificant evidence to change the ruling in Marshall's death from suicide to murder.

A 1984 grand jury reopened the case after Estes agreed to testify with a grant of immunity. The panel voted unanimously after a daylong hearing to change the cause of death to murder.

Estes told the grand jury that Johnson, then the vice president, ordered Marshall killed because he had information that would link Lyndon Johnson to Estes' illegal acquisition of cotton allotments. Estes said that Johnson also was worried about information getting out about an alleged multimillion dollar political slush fund controlled by then-Vice President Johnson.

Estes told the grand jury that Malcolm E. "Mac" Wallace, a Johnson family friend, killed Marshall — on orders from Johnson — and tried to make it look like suicide. Wallace died in an automobile accident in 1971.

Estes was fined $554,162 by the Agriculture Department on May 9, 1962 for the illegal transfer of 3,100 acres of cotton allotments the year before. He was convicted on federal conspiracy and mail fraud charges in 1964 and on mail fraud charges in 1979. He was released from prison in 1983 after being paroled.

John Paschall, the former Robertson County district attorney who oversaw the 1984 grand jury probe, testified Tuesday that Stegall and his deputies had botched the initial investigation of Marshall's death and that the 1962 grand jury didn't want to expose him.

Assistant Attorney General Lou Bright, who represented the state, argued that the Marshalls had not produced sufficient evidence to justify changing the state death records. But he said it is unlikely the state will appeal the ruling.

Justices give spy agencies broad powers of secrecy

D'N 4-17-85

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The CIA and other U.S. spy agencies are free to conceal from the public the identities of all intelligence sources, the Supreme Court ruled Tuesday.

The court, by a 7-2 vote, gave the CIA director unlimited power to protect not only secret agents but also all other sources of information — classified and unclassified. That includes the names of private scientists and researchers, and even academic journals.

"Congress intended to give the director of central intelligence broad power to protect the secrecy and integrity of the intelligence process," said Chief Justice Warren Burger for the court.

"Without such protections the agency would be virtually impotent," he said.

Tuesday's decision overturned a ruling that could have forced the CIA to disclose the names of college researchers and others who contributed to a project in the 1950s and 1960s code-named MKULTRA. The project involved brainwashing and administering of experimental drugs such as LSD to unsuspecting individuals. At least two people died because of the experiments.

The U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in 1983 in favor of the Ralph Nader lobbying group Public Citizen, which filed a 1978 suit under the Freedom of Information Act.

The suit said disclosure of the identities of the researchers and institutions would help uncover the scope of MKULTRA experiments, as well as the names of unsuspecting subjects.

The appeals court said the CIA may not withhold the names of its sources merely, for example, to guard against a public outcry. It said the agency could conceal the names only if it could show that the promise of confidentiality was required to obtain the information.

But Burger said the appeals court misunderstood "the realities of intelligence work, which often involves seemingly innocuous sources as well as unsuspecting individuals who provide valuable intelligence information."

(Frank Cancellare, above left, taking the second of two pictures within the first minute of the assassination. The full, uncropped version may show more than the one distributed by UPI. His first picture shows the south knoll and a shadowy figure with what could be a rifle - see Coverups #20 for Ed Tatro's analysis.)

DTH 7-16-85

FRANK CANCELLARE, photographer who took the world-famous picture of Harry Truman holding a newspaper incorrectly declaring Thomas Dewey the winner of the 1948 presidential election, died Monday. Cancellare, who was 75 on July 4, retired in 1980 after 52 years with Acme Newspictures, United Press and United Press International. He started as a "squeegie boy" in a New York darkroom and retired as the prize-winning dean of the White House photographers. He had been ill for several years and died of cancer. Cancellare's picture of a grinning and triumphant Truman on the rear platform of the presidential train after his stunning 1948 upset victory holding a Chicago Tribune headlined "Dewey Defeats Truman" probably was the most famous political photograph of all time.

DTH 7-13-85

CIA charge rejected against news show

From wire reports

WASHINGTON — The Federal Communications Commission Friday for the second time rejected a CIA complaint against an ABC News program that aired an accusation the agency had planned to murder a Honolulu businessman to prevent disclosure of covert operations.

The CIA had sought under the Fairness Doctrine to force ABC to retract the allegations in broadcasts made on the network's World News Tonight program last Sept. 19-20.

Allegations were made in the broadcast that the CIA had ordered the killing of Ronald Rewald, a Honolulu businessman then facing 100 counts of fraud, to prevent him from revealing his work as a covert agent.

The FCC rejected the CIA's complaint last November, saying there was no evidence ABC had intentionally distorted the information.

On Feb. 8, the CIA filed an amended complaint asking reconsideration and an investigation into what was described as ABC's "false charges and accusations about CIA activities."

The agency said it wanted the FCC to force ABC to respond.

The commission said the CIA failed to prove deliberate distortion by the network.

Broadcasting Aug 5 1985

Southern California Americans for Democratic Action Foundation has filed **$145-million lawsuit** in federal district court in Los Angeles **against CIA, CIA director William Casey and ABC,** alleging, among other things, that network defamed man who claims CIA directed him to kill Hawaii investment banker. Complaint stems from series of ABC News stories last year that broadcast allegation by Scott Barnes, who asserted CIA contact had tried to recruit him to kill Hawaii investment banker. CIA filed complaints at FCC (those complaints were subsequently rejected), asserting that allegation was false. ABC *World News Tonight* anchor Peter Jennings, two months after broadcasts, broadcast statement that network had been unable to obtain corroboration and that Barnes had refused to take lie-detector test. As result, Jennings said, ABC News had concluded that Barnes's "charges cannot be substantiated and we have no reason to doubt the CIA's denials." Barnes, however, according to his attorney, is contending that story is true. He's also alleging ABC libeled him by claiming he refused to take lie-detector test. Barnes's attorney said Barnes had offered to take such tests on seven occasions. Barnes, according to his attorney, is also alleging that Casey and CIA pressured ABC into making retraction.

STILL ON THE CASE

(Part 2)

Ron Rosenbaum

NOVEMBER 1983/TEXAS MONTHLY

WHILE THE POETS PEOPLED THE world of that November 22 with a grief-generated galaxy of hostile ghosts, the official investigators narrowed their focus to one man. Somehow lost in the controversy over the acoustical evidence is that the House Select Committee actually came up with a prime suspect. A candidate for the Man Behind It All. And testimony to back that up. It all comes down to what you think of the tail-and-the-dog story.

The tail-and-the-dog story is at the heart of the hottest area of assassination theory still thriving after all these years: mob-hit theory. In the past few years, mob-hit theory has succeeded in shouldering aside such other rival contenders as CIA-anti-Castro-hit theory, pro-Castro-hit theory, and KGB-complicity theory and in pushing itself to the forefront of consideration.

The rush to the mob-hit judgment began in 1979 with the publication of the final report of the House Select Committee. Written by organized-crime expert and chief counsel Robert Blakey, the committee report comes within a whisker of calling the events of November 22, 1963, a gangland slaying and within a whisker of a whisker of pinning the contract on New Orleans mob boss Carlos Marcello.

"The committee found that Marcello had motive, means, and opportunity to have President John F. Kennedy assassinated, though it was unable to establish direct evidence of Marcello's complicity," the report states. "The committee identified the presence of one critical evidentiary element that was lacking with other organized crime figures examined by the committee: credible associations relating both Lee Harvey Oswald and Jack Ruby to figures having a relationship, albeit tenuous, with Marcello's crime family."

The key here is Oswald's uncle Dutz. Ruby's organized-crime ties—to teamster thugs connected with Jimmy Hoffa, to Sam Giancana and guys like John Roselli who were in on the CIA-mob plots to assassinate Fidel Castro—had long been known. What the House Select Committee established was an Oswald organized-crime connection: his uncle Charles "Dutz" Murret, of New Orleans, whom the committee described as both "a surrogate father of sorts throughout much of Oswald's life in New Orleans" and "an associate of significant organized crime figures affiliated with the Marcello organization."

The abstract connections are all there. We know that Marcello hated the Kennedy brothers with a deep bitterness that grew out of much more than fear of the threat that Bobby Kennedy's organized-crime prosecutions posed to his billion-dollar racketeering empire. Marcello had experienced the kind of physical humiliation at the hands of Kennedy justice that can brew a passion for revenge surpassing mere calculation of profit and loss.

Just two months after John Kennedy's inauguration, Marcello was virtually kidnapped in New Orleans by immigration officers acting at the direction of Bobby Kennedy's Justice Department. Arrested, handcuffed, he was dragged without a hearing to a Border Patrol plane and, according to Robert Blakey, "flown 1200 miles to Guatemala City and dumped there, without luggage." When his presence became known to the authorities in Guatemala, he was expelled and "unceremoniously flown to an out-of-the-way village in the jungle of El Salvador, where [he and his lawyer] were left stranded. Salvadorian soldiers jailed and interrogated the two men for five days, then put them on a bus and took them twenty miles into the mountains. . . . They were hardly prepared for the mountain hike, as they were dressed in silk shantung suits and alligator shoes. . . . Marcello fainted three times. . . . During a downhill scramble, Marcello fell and broke two ribs" before reaching an airstrip and managing to reenter the U.S. illegally.

Indubitably, in all this unaccustomed humiliation at the hands of the Kennedys, the motive is there.

But where is the direct connection? That's where the tail-and-the-dog story comes in. The teller of the tale is Ed Becker, whom Blakey describes as "a former Las Vegas promoter who had lived on the fringe of the underworld."

The scene is Churchill Farms, Marcello's plantation outside New Orleans. It is September 1962. Becker is there to discuss a business proposition, but the talk

turns to the Kennedy campaign against organized crime. The mention of Bobby Kennedy's name drives Marcello into a rage. "Don't worry about that little Bobby son of a bitch," he shouts, according to Becker. "He's going to be taken care of."

How? Becker testified before the House Select Committee that the plan was to "take care of" Bobby by "taking care of" his brother and that Marcello "clearly stated that he was going to arrange to have President Kennedy murdered in some way." Becker said that Marcello compared Bobby to the tail and his brother Jack to the whole dog, citing a proverb: If you cut off the tail, the dog will keep biting; but if you chop off the head, the dog will die, tail and all.

The committee took a lot of time painstakingly and convincingly corroborating the circumstantial details of the story. Then they called Marcello in to testify about it. He denied it. But he also testified before the committee in executive session that he made his living as a tomato salesman, testimony that his recent Brilab conviction calls into question.

The tail-and-the-dog story may not be enough evidence to indict or convict, although I have been told that the committee staff forwarded its Marcello material to the Justice Department in order to encourage it to do just that. But Becker's story takes mob-hit theory a step beyond motive, means, and opportunity in the abstract.

THAT NIGHT, BACK IN MY HOTEL room after Penn Jones' tour, recovering from the plunge into undiluted grief, I continue calling my buff contacts across the country. A long midnight talk with Bay Area buff Robert Ranftel is the most provocative.

Ranftel is a codiscoverer of a fascinating new piece of information about the case. The Gillin story. The Psychedelic Oswald theory.

Don't laugh. It's based on careful research, and it addresses perhaps the most enduring and perplexing mystery remaining in the case: the mind of Lee Harvey Oswald.

Because, after all these years the question for most researchers is no longer whether Oswald was involved but who he was. Was he KGB or CIA? Was he a pro-Castro partisan infiltrating anti-Castro groups, or was he an anti-Castro activist setting up false pro-Castro fronts? Was he informing for the FBI or being informed on? Did he support JFK or hate him? There is convincing evidence on both sides of each of these questions. How could one man have created so much ambiguity about his true identity in so short a time? And why? Was he just confused? Or was he out to confuse?

Ranftel unearthed a clue to this dilemma, an episode that took place during Oswald's mysterious sojourn in New Orleans the summer before the assassination. The Gillin story first surfaced in a document that wasn't declassified until 1977, an FBI memo about an interview with a New Orleans assistant district attorney named Edward Gillin. On the day Oswald was killed, Gillin phoned the FBI to report a strange encounter he had had in the summer of 1963 with a man calling himself Lee Oswald. How this skinny guy named Oswald had come into his office and started talking about a book he'd read by Aldous Huxley. A book about psychedelic drugs. "He was looking for a drug that would open his vision, you know, mind expansion," Gillin recalled. He had come to the assistant DA, Oswald said, because he wanted to know if such drugs were legal. And how to get them.

Oswald and Aldous Huxley. What a bizarre meeting of minds. Oswald and psychedelic drugs. What a combination of ingredients. And yet Ranftel and his collaborators, Martin Lee and Jeff Cohen of the Assassination Information Bureau, came up with several other periods in Oswald's career during which the psychedelic connection might have been made.

The U-2 base in Atsugi, Japan, for instance. Where Oswald served as a Marine Corps radar operator before he defected to the Soviets. Ranftel and company discovered that during the time Oswald was stationed there, Atsugi base was a storage and testing facility for the drugs used in the CIA's Operation Artichoke. Artichoke was the forerunner of Operation MK-ULTRA, the CIA's search for a foolproof truth serum – at first called the Twilight Zone drug – which led to the testing of LSD, often on unsuspecting military personnel. Ranftel and his colleagues located a Marine who was stationed at Atsugi at the same time as Oswald and says that he himself was given LSD and other psychedelics.

And then there was Oswald's curious bad-trip episode at Atsugi. Ranftel, Cohen, and Lee described it last March in their *Rolling Stone* article, "Did Oswald Drop Acid?": "While Oswald was on guard duty, gunfire was heard. He was found sitting on the ground, more than a little dazed, babbling about seeing things in the bushes . . . what in the Sixties would become known as a bad trip."

Ranftel and company point to the widespread suspicion that Oswald's defection to the Soviet Union may have been staged with the connivance and encouragement of the CIA or military intelligence, both of which were at the time repeatedly trying to plant "defector" operatives inside the USSR. They cite CIA sources revealing that agents dispatched into situations with the potential for hostile interrogation – including the use of psychedelic interrogation aids – were often exposed to such drugs before setting out on those missions, so they would be able to recognize and cope with the effects of the drugs. People so exposed were known in the intelligence world as enlightened operatives.

Oswald an enlightened operative? Oswald a Huxleyan psychedelic mystic? The implications are, indeed, as they used to say, mind-blowing.

For one thing, as Ranftel remarks tonight, "it might explain that strange, quizzical smile you see on the guy's face in so many of his pictures."

What was going on behind that smile? The Psychedelic Oswald hypothesis offers an explanation, a way of reconciling some of the intractable contradictions he left behind. CIA or KGB? Pro-Castro or anti-Castro? Perhaps the answer is neither and both. Perhaps the answer is that he enjoyed the game of posing as both, of playing at infiltrating one side on behalf of the other, of playing both sides against the other, the pleasures of the enlightened operative. We know that as a boy Oswald's favorite TV show was *I Led Three Lives*. Had drugs given a psychedelic twist to the solemnity of that classic of role playing?

The Psychedelic Oswald hypothesis might go a long way toward explaining some of the mysteries of Oswald's strange summer in New Orleans – those months before the assassination when he began playing the dangerous game of pro- and anti-Castro politics and which climaxed with his mysterious pre-assassination trip to Mexico City.

NEW ORLEANS, THE FRENCH QUARter's decaying fringe, 544 Camp Street, to be specific. The most intriguing address in the whole JFK case. Only it's not here anymore. I came all the way to this steamy, sweaty late August swamp of a city to enter the building at 544 Camp Street because some buff or other told me it was still here. Because, of all the shrines in the story of O., this one might hold the clue to what was going on in his mind in the summer of 1963, when he fled Dallas, arrived here, and began to act weird.

One thing almost all conspiracy theorists, even Warren Commission defenders, agree on is that though the assassination was an act executed in Dallas, it was conceived in the contagion of intrigue that infected the mind of Oswald that August in New Orleans.

The mind of Oswald. I'm beginning to feel some inkling of the turmoil therein as I stand before the curious sculpture that has replaced the now-demolished building at 544 Camp Street.

I fled Dallas yesterday, sick of brain and body. A bad case of food poisoning got to my body. So bad that for a while I thought I'd end up as number 189 in Penn Jones' list of suspicious casualties of the case. (Of course, how could they know I would stuff myself with barbecue in that particular place on Mockingbird Lane?)

It was Gary Mack's assassination film festival that got to my brain. Drove me out of town. Not the goat's-head hypothesis, not the eyestrain from the Bronson-film blowups. No, it was the Oswald craniotomy controversy that took me out of the merely maddening world of *Blow-Up* right into *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* horror.

Should I tell you about this experience, or will you think it too ghoulish, too gruesome?

Notes on the assassination film festival. Arrived Gary Mack's lovely suburban Fort Worth tract home. Eager to see the Bronson film, but first there was Gary's critique of the goat's-head hypothesis.

The goat's-head hypothesis is the official explanation of the most horrible moment in that horror-filled home movie known as the Zapruder film. The moment when the fatal head shot appeared to slam the president back into the seat of his car as though it had been a frontal hit.

Gary ran and reran that moment for me on his home projector and screen set.

Not that I objected. After all, it could be argued that if you haven't seen the Zapruder film, you haven't actually experienced the assassination. You know a president was shot, an office vacated, but you haven't seen the man's head brutally blown apart, you haven't seen John Kennedy die, and so perhaps you haven't had a chance to confront the loss.

It was the sudden appearance in the seventies of bootleg copies of the Zapruder film and the showing of high-quality copies to congressmen that did more than anything to get the Senate and the House to launch their own investigations of the shooting.

Because, watching that shot knock Kennedy backward, all the senses cry out that it came from the front. But Oswald, we know, was behind. Which would mean a second gunman and therefore a conspiracy.

And yet from a restudy of the autopsy evidence the House Select Committee concluded – just as the Warren Commission had – that the head shot was fired from behind.

"How could that be?" I asked Gary Mack.

"Well, they cited the films of the goat's-head tests," Gary said. "Back in 1948 the Army did filmed studies of the impact of bullets on goats' heads that demonstrated what they called a neuromuscular reaction, which in certain circumstances will cause a backward motion even with a shot from behind."

"And do you accept that?" I asked.

"Well, the thing they fail to take note of," he told me, "is that in the neuromuscular reaction, the extremities are supposed to go rigid. Now if you look closely at the president at the moment he's hit – here, I'll slow it down so you can see that doesn't happen to Kennedy; he's all loose and wobbly."

Next, the Bronson film. Real *Blow-Up* stuff. There was the limo turning the corner onto Elm Street right below the Book Depository, beginning to head downhill toward the Triple Underpass and the spot a hundred yards farther down Elm, where the shots would hit. The real mystery of that particular moment, a mystery that becomes apparent once you've walked the motorcade's route in Dealey Plaza, past the Book Depository and down toward the fatal spot, a mystery neither the official inquiries nor the amateur critics have satisfactorily explained or even addressed, is this: why didn't Oswald, or whoever was up in the Book Depository, shoot the president when he was coming right toward the sniper's-nest window, when he was heading down Houston Street straight into his gunsight, a mere thirty yards away? Why did the assassin wait until the president's car turned the corner onto Elm Street and began pulling away? Was there an inner struggle, some crisis of conscience going on in the assassin's mind? Did he almost decide to let his target slip away unharmed?

The Bronson-film blowup that Gary Mack showed me that afternoon did not address that question. The Bronson film was really a kind of ghost story. Because in the early footage, six minutes before the limo reached the fatal turn onto Elm Street, there, up in the corner of the frame, in the windows six floors above the street, pale, ghostly, evanescent shapes flickered.

Gary had blowups of the crucial frames. They showed dim gleams of shadowy shapes in the corner sniper's-nest window. And pale, ghostly presences moving, blotches and blurs, in the two windows next to that. Windows that should have been empty at the time of the shooting, according to the lone-assassin theory.

Assassins? Or artifacts in the photosensitive emulsion?

Gary Mack thinks they're men wearing pale green and magenta shirts. They could be. They could be John, Paul, George, and Ringo, for all I can tell. As a matter of fact, does anyone know exactly where the Fab Four were that day? If we go by the cui bono, or who-benefits, theory of the assassination, the finger of guilt could well swing toward the lovable Liverpudlian lads, since it's always been my belief that the Beatlemania that swept America just eight weeks after the assassination was really a hysterical transference of repressed JFK-assassination shock and grief. The link being the hair – both John Kennedy and John Lennon being loved for the look of their locks.

I refrained from exploring this theory with Gary, but he had convincing technical answers to my other objections. He was certain that he had prima facie evidence of conspiracy right there on his screen, the kind of evidence no goat's-head shoots can refute, and that costly computer enhancement, which he can't afford, might even show us human features as well as the shirts of the assassins.

But scientific evidence alone is not enough here. This case requires what Kierkegaard called a leap of faith. The existence of God, K. argued, can never be proved by constructing a scaffolding of rational argument. Faith can only come through a leap from that scaffolding into the realm of what he called the absurd. And El Exigente here is not ready to make that leap. He is troubled also by the question of what happened to the green and magenta men and, if they were up there shooting, what happened to their rifles and bullets?

No leap of faith required in the craniotomy controversy, though. No, this one requires a leap back into the grave. Oswald's grave. Or, as Gary prefers, the grave of Oswald's impostor. Because Gary had new evidence that very well

might be enough to cause people to open up Oswald's grave *again*. That's right. Just two years after the notorious Eddowes-Marina exhumation seemed to establish that Oswald was the guy buried in Oswald's grave, Gary came upon a key discrepancy in the exhumation evidence.

He began to explain the thing to me in great and gruesome detail, a tale that might be called the Clue of the Assassin's Skull.

To understand the importance of his new discovery, Gary said, you have to know what they did to Oswald's skull during his first autopsy back in 1963.

"It's part of the record they did a craniotomy on him, back then," Gary told me. "They sawed off the top of his skull with a power saw. They reached underneath the brain, cut it off, and lifted it out, and they noted in the official record that a craniotomy had been done.

"Now, when they did the exhumation this time, no mention was made of a craniotomy. And then Paul Groody, the mortician, said it had suddenly struck him after they had reburied the corpse that he hadn't noticed that a craniotomy had been done on the skull of whoever it was buried in Oswald's grave. The skin had rotted away, leaving a naked skull. But with a craniotomy, the top of the skull should have fallen off. It didn't. In fact, there are videotapes of the exhumation showing them handling the skull, even holding it upside down, and nothing falls off. And at one point they severed the head and placed it on a metal stand. Somebody bumped it and it rolled onto the table, but the top still didn't fall off. Which proves that it can't be Oswald's skull down there, that it must be an impostor. Wouldn't you like to see that tape, Ron?"

At that point I made an excuse and fled town.

AND SO I AM HERE AT 544 CAMP Street. Trying to forget about Oswald's skull. Trying to get inside his head. Let me explain why this particular address is so important.

Shortly after Oswald arrived in New Orleans in April 1963, he embarked on a mystifying campaign of dangerous and duplicitous political intrigue whose motive is still obscure. One of his first acts was to contact the national headquarters of the pro-Castro Fair Play for Cuba Committee (FPCC) to get a charter to set up a New Orleans chapter. He gave the name "A. J. Hidell," one of his false identities, as president and only member of the chapter.

At the same time, he was approaching anti-Castro Cuban-exile groups, declaring that he shared their feelings, boasting of his marksmanship and his Marine training in guerrilla warfare, and telling them that he wanted to be sent on a paramilitary mission to Cuba.

Then, in August 1963, one of the anti-Castro activists he had been soliciting came upon Oswald distributing pro-Castro pamphlets in his role as one-man Fair Play for Cuba Committee. A fight ensued. Oswald was arrested and jailed. Demanded to see an FBI agent. Told the bureau he was willing to inform on the pro-Castro movement.

Just what was he up to? And on behalf of whom? That's where that address 544 Camp Street becomes so interesting. It's at the heart of the paradox of O.'s simultaneous pro-Castro and anti-Castro activity. The address first surfaced in the case when it was found rubber-stamped on one of the pro-Castro tracts Oswald was handing out. It identified 544 Camp Street as the headquarters of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. And yet not only did the building at that address never house the FPCC but it also swarmed with right-wing anti-Castro groups and was the headquarters of a right-wing ex-FBI agent named Guy Banister, who was that very summer recruiting people to infiltrate pro-Castro movements.

What was Oswald up to? As far back as 1964, Warren Commission staffers were scratching their heads over that and writing memos to each other about the possibility that Oswald's paper FPCC group was a front set up to infiltrate the pro-Castro movement on behalf of the anti-Castro group based in 544 Camp Street.

They never were able to resolve it. When the staffers presented their memo on Oswald in New Orleans to the harried chief counsel of the Warren Commission, it came back with these words scrawled on it: "At this stage we are supposed to be closing doors, not opening them."

Subsequent Senate and House assassination investigations tried to reopen the doors to 544 Camp Street but found only doors within doors.

"We have evidence," then-Senator Richard Schweiker declared, "which places at 544 Camp Street intelligence agents, Lee Oswald, the mob, and anti-Castro Cuban exiles."

Yes, behind those doors Oswald had gotten himself entangled in some of the darker strands in the fabric of American life. And yet what does it all prove? Perhaps there is a clue behind another set of doors—*The Doors of Perception*.

Consider this passage from Huxley's classic account of the psychedelic experience, based on his mescaline trips:

> The schizophrenic is like a man permanently under the influence of mescalin . . . which, because it never permits him to look at the world with merely human eyes, scares him into interpreting its unremitting strangeness, its burning intensity of significance, as the manifestations of human or even cosmic malevolence, calling for the most desperate countermeasures, *from murderous violence at one end of the scale* [italics mine] to catatonia, or psychological suicide, at the other end. And once embarked upon the downward, the infernal road, one would never be able to stop. . . .
>
> "If you started the wrong way," I said in answer to the investigator's questions, "everything that happened would be a proof of the conspiracy against you. It would be self-validating. You couldn't draw a breath without knowing it was part of the plot."*

This last paragraph strikes me as a good description of the mind of the assassination buff as well as of the assassin.

Up until now there have been three theories relating to Oswald's strange immersion in the subcurrents swirling around 544 Camp Street: (1) he was a pro-Castro activist infiltrating anti-Castro movements on behalf of Cuban agents, (2) he was an agent of anti-Castro forces using a pro-Castro front to infiltrate Cuba, perhaps to kill Castro, and (3) he was a pro-Castro activist being cultivated and set up as a patsy by sinister anti-Castro-mob-intelligence world operatives.

These contradictory theories have one thing in common. They all make Oswald a pawn in someone else's game.

If, however, we go through the doors of perception and look at New Orleans through the eyes of an "enlightened" O., another way of thinking about the ambiguities suggests itself.

Look at New Orleans through the eyes of an O. whose favorite TV program as a child was *I Led Three Lives*. Who may have absorbed the dark conspiracy-obsessed consciousness of that Huxley passage. Someone who has been a U.S. Marine, then a Soviet citizen, then a U.S. citizen again. Someone for whom change of identity has become second nature, someone who has seen the world from both sides and been disillusioned by both. Someone who—with his doors of perception opened—thinks he sees through it all. Someone for whom the only pleasure now is in the posing, the plotting, and the counterplotting. Look at O. as a pre-assassination assassination buff. Not a lone nut but a lone mastermind, deploying identities the way Penn Jones deploys gunmen. What a paradise New Orleans would have seemed that steamy summer to someone like that, with its murky web of plot and counterplot.

How convenient 544 Camp Street would have been. So many strands of intrigue so close at hand, so many strings so easy to pull.

How inconvenient for my purposes that 544 Camp Street has disappeared from the face of the earth. How I wanted to walk its halls and get a feel for its atmosphere. But the building was torn down some years ago to make way for a new federal court building. The old building's exact location at the corner of Lafayette Street is now a concrete plaza empty except for a large, abstract, federally subsidized sculpture.

And yet that sculpture . . .

The best way to describe the sculpture would be to call it a sixteen-foot twisted helix of black painted steel. Military-industrial-complex-size *damaged chromosomes*. Its title: *Out of There*. Hard to believe its creator did not know the significance of the place in which his work was installed. A better monument to the tortuous doubling and redoubling of the mind of Lee Harvey Oswald could not be imagined.

I wander south on Camp Street, passing comatose derelicts, disintegrating warehouse buildings, and dingy rooming houses. Come upon the Crescent Street Garage, where O. used to drop in and read gun magazines in the office. Next to the Reily Coffee Company, where he was employed, greasing coffee-grinding machines. The garage was also, according to the testimony of a mechanic, a depot for unmarked FBI and Secret Service cars. The mechanic said that he saw envelopes pass between agents in unmarked cars and Oswald.

Back up the street, past *Out of There*, to the all-night drugstore on the corner of Canal. Another O. hangout that summer. Horrible glaring fluorescents that must have been around since that summer, truly a depressing place, the nature of whose clientele can be surmised from a scrawled sign over the prescriptions counter: "Due to Uncertainties All Drug Sales Are Final."

Due to uncertainties. I push through the sweaty atmosphere back toward my hotel, mired in the maze of uncertainties surrounding O.'s Camp Street summer. His sojourn there suggests that everything proves nothing. Provides support for almost every conspiracy theory; proves none.

AND SO THERE IT IS. AFTER ALL these years. Theories, uncertainties, possible connections, suspicious coincidences. Yes, the Warren Commission investigation was inept and incomplete, relied on information supplied by agencies with a stake in covering up their role. And yet, twenty years later, several minor and one major congressional inquiry down the line, there is only more uncertainty.

I speak to Robert Ranftel again. This time about the dismaying question of whether it is time to call it quits, admit defeat, and give up the whole intractable case. Perhaps even concede that—in the absence of any proven alternative—Oswald may have acted alone; the Warren Commission, for all its bungling, might have gotten it right after all.

"What about the mob-hit theory," I ask Ranftel. "Isn't there any hope for that? I mean the House Committee pretty much endorsed it?"

"Well, mob-hit theory is where the action is now," Ranftel says. "Everybody's writing their mob-hit book. Did you see the latest—*Contract on America* [by David Scheim, subtitled *The Mafia Murders of John and Robert Kennedy*]?"

"Do you think mob-hit theory is just another buff trend?"

"I think the organized-crime theory is sort of a halfway house out of the Kennedy case for a lot of buffs," he says.

"A halfway house?"

"Well, it solves a lot of problems. You look at the typical mob hit. It's a murder that goes unsolved. And the people who did it typically never talk. So you can almost use the fact that the JFK case remains unsolved as evidence it was a mob hit. It allows a lot of people to walk away from the case and say we've brought it as far as it can go. You see a lot of assassination buffs now turning into organized-crime buffs."

A halfway house out of the case. Ranftel's phrase suddenly clarifies for me a persistent subtext I thought I'd been picking up in my conversations with some of the best of the buffs. Take Paul Hoch, for instance. Almost universally regarded as one of the most careful and meticulous researchers in the game. A computer programmer by profession, he specialized in looking into an area of ambiguity and searching the thousands of cubic feet of declassified documents in the archives until he found the single document that clarified the point in question. He was still working on the case—publishing his *Echoes of Conspiracy* newsletter—but his work now was filled with echoes of echoes. Reports of reports. Clippings. There seemed to be no edge, no direction, no sense that any of this was leading to anything.

"I get the impression that you're shifting from being an assassination investigator to something more like a commentator," I told Hoch.

"I think that's true. A historian might be more accurate. I try to keep the record straight."

"But what about solving the case?" I asked.

"I just don't know," he said. "I just don't know if it's too late now."

TOO LATE? WOULD IT MATTER IF it weren't? Maybe that's the real question. Maybe, after all, there's no big secret, no clandestine conspiracy there to uncover. Immersed once again in the frustrations of the case, the frequent foolishness and apparent futility of the buff biz, I find myself almost longing to succumb to the simplicity and conventional comfort of lone-assassin certainty. To be able to stuff all the seething ambiguities, strange coincidences, provocative hints, all the suggestions, implications, curious connections, and mysterious sightings that the critics have turned up, just stuff them all in a drawer and say, "Case closed."

Before I do that, though, there is one man I want to track down and talk to. A private eye. My onetime philosophy prof turned buff turned shamus: Josiah Thompson. What will the author of *The Lonely Labyrinth* have to say about the JFK case now, after twenty years, when it has grown more labyrinthine—and lonelier.

I have some misgivings about calling him. Afraid, I guess, that he has become another casualty of the case. Picturing him in some seedy Sam Spade–like office, embittered and cynical over his failure t

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crack the JFK case, trudging through the fog, doing divorce work or something similarly dispiriting. But after the first five minutes on the phone with him I know that Thompson is just the person I am looking for. He has emerged from the maze with his lively intelligence, judicious wit, and wry humor intact. And his private-eye work has given him new insights into the problems of the Kennedy case.

He begins by explaining why he chose to make the switch from professor to private eye. After the publication of *Six Seconds in Dallas*, after serving as a consultant on the evidence for *Life* magazine's JFK reinvestigation in 1966 and 1967, he returned to a prof job at Haverford College, disillusioned by the fiasco of the Garrison investigation.

"Garrison just blew the critics out of the water," Thompson tells me. "So I sort of gave up for a while in the late sixties."

After completing his Kierkegaard biography in 1973, he turned his attentions to the complexities of that other twisted and tormented late-nineteenth-century thinker, Friedrich Nietzsche.

While he was on leave out in San Francisco writing a biography of Nietzsche, he had dinner with famed private investigator Hal Lipset. At the time, Lipset was being considered as a possible chief investigator for the newly formed House Select Committee on Assassinations. But Thompson found himself enthralled by Lipset's discussion of his own cases.

"Just on a lark I hit him for a job," Thompson tells me. "And he gave me one. Before I knew it, I was working for five dollars an hour doing surveillance in Oakland."

He was good enough that when Lipset's partner David Fechheimer formed his own firm, he asked Thompson to come to work for him and gave him a murder case for his first assignment.

"I started working on a really great case," he tells me. "And I couldn't give that up. It was too much fun."

In a short time, it seems, he turned into an absolute ace of a private eye.

There's one case in particular that pleases him. A Korean-born prisoner. Jailed for five years on a murder rap. Thompson reinvestigated the original case. Got it overturned. Got his man out of jail.

"He didn't do it," Thompson tells me. "I know who did it."

Interesting: he got an innocent man off, and he knows the identity of the real killer, who is presumably still walking around.

Dangerous knowledge. It is gratifying to find that Thompson hasn't fled from the frustrations of the seemingly insoluble but has instead embraced them. I envy him; I am tempted to hit him up for a private-eye job myself. But first I want to get his private eye–philosopher's assessment of the state of the art of the JFK case.

A few years ago it looked as if Thompson might get credit for cracking that one too. When the House Select Committee came out with its report on the acoustical analysis of the Dallas police tape, it placed a gunman behind the stockade fence on the grassy knoll, exactly the spot Thompson pointed to in his book.

But, refreshingly, he's willing to concede that the acoustical evidence that once promised such certainty now looks muddied.

"Uncertainty has replaced clarity," he says wistfully. "We're back in the swamp. Back in the morass again."

"The lonely labyrinth?" I ask.

He just laughs.

And refreshingly, considering that he was one of the original *Warren Report* critics, he is prepared to concede that in crucial aspects of the case, further investigation has proved him wrong and the commission right.

The much-ridiculed single-bullet theory, for instance. The whole lone-assassin theory depends in complex but definite ways on the Warren Commission's belief that one bullet went through JFK's body, smashed through John Connally's fifth rib and wrist, and emerged unscratched. I have actually handled that so-called pristine bullet myself in the National Archives, felt how smooth and unmarked its surface is, and scoffed at the idea that it could have emerged so utterly unscathed.

But, as Thompson points out, recent neutron activation analysis of the bullet and the tiny fragments left in Connally's wrist make it almost a scientific certainty that they came from the same bullet.

"That's very powerful evidence that the single-bullet theory is correct," he says. "It absolutely astonishes me, but you gotta look at what the evidence is. One thing I've learned from these years of being a private investigator is that I no longer place much faith in most eyewitness testimony to prove anything. If you're gonna rely on anything, it's the physical evidence and photographs. Another thing I've learned is that it's a waste of time to try to prove anything with government documents, the endless nit-picking that was done by the critics in the JFK case comparing discrepancies in what a witness said to the police or the FBI in a deposition and what they testified to later. You learn that the police get it wrong all the time and that nit-picking doesn't get you closer to the truth."

The truth. What *does* Thompson think is the truth in the JFK case? Is he actually leaning toward accepting the Warren Commission verdict that Oswald acted alone?

No, Thompson says. In fact, he still doesn't think the evidence adds up to Oswald's firing *any* shots that day.

"I think it's maybe sixty-forty that he didn't," Thompson tells me. "Although I can see reasonable men taking the other position."

"What, then, do you think Oswald's role was that day?" I ask him.

"I've stayed away from analyzing," he tells me. "What you have when you look into him is puzzle boxes within Chinese puzzle boxes. In the logic of intelligence circles, anything can mean anything. I think he was scheming in ways I don't understand, and finally, when the president was shot, the curtain opened and he recognized a lot more was going on than he knew."

And who does he think O. was scheming with? Thompson leans toward the mob-hit school of thought because of the new evidence developed by the House Select Committee about Ruby's connections and movements. "If Ruby was given access to the jail, if Ruby was *stalking* Oswald, as it seems they've demonstrated, one has to ask the question, why? And you have to look at the statistics on organized-crime prosecutions and how they dropped off after the assassination. One thing you can say about the assassination is that it's been enormously *effective*. It worked. They blew his head off, and they got away with it."

They?

"Why has nobody broken? And what group can enforce that kind of discipline? Nobody's turned. Of course, maybe there's nobody to turn."

Is there anything his private-eye's instinct tells him about the case that might solve it or explain why it's unsolved?

"That goddam bullet," he says, "that bullet just doesn't fit. You have to consider the possibility that evidence was tampered with. I know when I was working on the *Life* project they left me alone with that bullet for fifteen minutes. I could have done anything with it. But once you raise that possibility – that some pieces of the puzzle have their edges shaved off or pieces never in the puzzle have been brought in – you're never gonna put that puzzle together. In my heart of hearts, that's what I believe happened. And since we no longer have objective criteria of physical evidence, we're left with an epistemological conundrum."

An epistemological conundrum. Yes, that's what it has always seemed like to El Exigente. Somehow the JFK case is a lesson in the limits of reason, in the impossibility of ever knowing anything with absolute certainty. Gödel's Proof and Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle all wrapped into one. That's why El Exigente has always stayed above the battle, observing the foibles of the buffs from a position of amused detachment, resisting the impulse to become obsessed with knowledge maddeningly dangerous for its unknowability. I've seen too many brilliant people – some of them my friends – self-destruct in the attempt. I've always been too cautious to risk becoming a passionate casualty of the case.

But now Thompson, El Exigente's mentor, turns the tables on the Demanding One. In his modest but insistent Socratic way, he demands to know what I think.

I tell him I've gone into this most recent journey through the state of the art with the vague feeling that the mob-hit theorists probably have come closest to the truth of the case, but I've come out of it feeling that they have failed to nail it down. That the tail-and-the-dog story is as close as they'll ever come but it falls short of being proof, and that the rest is all the usual suggestive connections of the sort that can support any number of unproven theories.

And, I tell Thompson, I find myself longing – because of the advent of the two-decade anniversary – to come to some conclusion instead of suspending judgment on the crime of the century forever. And that although I am resisting it, to my dismay I find myself tempted after all these years to give in and embrace the *Warren Report* conclusions.

"You're right to say the conspiracy explanations are unsatisfying," he replies. "And you're right to recognize the urge to push it all into one pattern or the other for the satisfaction of having a conclusion. But," he added, "you're also right to resist that temptation."

And so – for another ten years at least – I will. As far as I'm concerned, the case is still not closed. ♣

(This sidebar, like the one accompanying Part 1 last issue, was written by Ron Rosenbaum.)

THEY CAN'T ALL BE RIGHT

After twenty years these are the assassination theories that still survive.

WASHING MACHINE THEORY. Oswald's reconciliation with Marina on eve of assassination thwarted when they argue about buying a washing machine. Rejected and distraught, he kills the president.

KGB SLEEPER THEORY. Early Warren Commission critic Edward J. Epstein shifts his ground in *Legend: The Secret World of Lee Harvey Oswald*. He speculates Oswald fired the shots alone but perhaps with the knowledge, if not the instigation, of the KGB, who sent Oswald back to the U.S. after his defection, as an unwitting, or "sleeper," agent.

JFK STILL ALIVE THEORY. A perennial item of JFK-cult fantasy, favored by publications like the *National Enquirer*. First attributed to and then denied by Truman Capote a dozen years ago. Usually involves report that JFK is alive but comatose in obscure Swiss Alps clinic, seen only by family members.

MILITARY INTELLIGENCE THEORY. House Select Committee found "extremely troublesome" the 1973 destruction by Defense Department of its classified file on Oswald. Other intelligence agencies point finger at Oswald's possible military-intelligence role to disavow their own connections with Oswald.

TIMES-PICAYUNE THEORY. Jean Davison in *Oswald's Game* portrays Oswald as a committed Marxist and Castro partisan. Suggests he was in New Orleans when the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* published an AP interview Castro gave on September 7, 1963, in which the Cuban leader said he knew of U.S. plots against him and warned that those who instigated them would be subject to retribution. Davison believes that Oswald took this as inspiration to kill JFK in retaliation for the attempts to assassinate Fidel.

MOB HIT THEORY. New Orleans mob boss Carlos Marcello or Florida boss Santos Trafficante or Jimmy Hoffa or all three together order the hit, perhaps using anti-Castro Cubans recruited for Castro assassination plots by John Roselli and Sam Giancana. The latter two were murdered gangland style shortly before they were scheduled to testify before the Senate Intelligence Committee.

CIA SLEEPER THEORY. Oswald recruited as a young Marine by CIA or Naval Intelligence. Asked to pose as Marxist defector to Soviet Union to infiltrate USSR for us. Later manipulated or made a patsy by "a renegade element in U.S. intelligence" who set him up to take the hit and place the blame on ostensible pro-Russian, pro-Castro figure.

SAIGON REVENGE THEORY. JFK hit came three weeks after murder of President Diem of South Viet Nam as reprisal for Kennedy-sponsored coup. LBJ once suggested wealthy Diem family or pro-Diem intelligence faction might have had revenge motive for JFK hit.

AMLASH TURNAROUND THEORY. While JFK is ostensibly putting out feelers toward rapprochement with Fidel in fall of 1963, uncontrolled elements of CIA continue to plot murder of the Cuban leader. Key figure: Rolando Cubela, code-named AMLASH, close associate of Castro. CIA agent in Paris supplied AMLASH with deadly weapons (including a poison fountain pen) on the day Kennedy was shot. Theory is that AMLASH plot leaked to Castro and led to retaliation against JFK.

FRANK STURGIS THEORY. Frank Sturgis, Howard Hunt's associate in the Watergate burglary, says he has info that Jack Ruby was part of Castro drug-smuggling plot and orchestrated JFK killing along with Cuban agents on behalf of Fidel.

JAPANESE RESPONSIBILITY THEORY. Meticulous investigator Jones Harris suggests Oswald was recruited by Japanese secret agents at Atsugi.

ROTTEN APPLES IN THE SECRET SERVICE THEORY. David Lifton in *Best Evidence* suggests that conspirators seized the body of the president and then subjected it to secret surgery to create evidence of trajectory reversal (the impression that shots were fired from behind). Lifton alludes to "certain rotten apples in the Secret Service," in addition to higher-level figures in government.

FWST 7-31-85

RFK probe to be unsealed

LOS ANGELES — Seventeen years after investigating the assassination of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, the Los Angeles Police Department was directed Tuesday to make public its confidential, 1,500-page summary of the case, but not before editing from it evidence still deemed "sensitive."

In unanimously ordering disclosure of the summary, the Los Angeles Police Commission turned down requests from a handful of scholars who came from as far away as Massachusetts requesting access to all of the department's investigative case file on the Kennedy assassination.

The file, a massive collection of more than 50,000 documents and 1,700 photos, is stored in five cabinets at the police department's Parker Center headquarters. Only a small fraction of the reports has never been made public.

History for sale

DMN 6-22-85

Ex-Book Depository owner offers JFK-assassination artifacts

By Laura Miller
Staff Writer of The News

A man who used to own the Texas School Book Depository wants to sell Dallas a slice of its history.

Aubrey Mayhew, who owned the building from 1970 until 1972 and now lives in Nashville, Tenn., says he owns the original sixth-floor window where Lee Harvey Oswald allegedly perched to shoot President John F. Kennedy.

The Dallas County Historical Foundation says Mayhew has contacted the group about buying the window and as many as 3,000 other Kennedy-assassination artifacts he claims to own.

The offer was discussed at a recent board meeting of the foundation, a panel of 11 Dallas residents appointed in September 1983 to oversee fund raising and construction of a $3 million, sixth-floor Kennedy exhibit.

The exhibit will be purely educational and historical in nature — with no artifacts collected and no souvenirs sold.

But it appears that Mayhew's offer may be an exception.

Foundation President Lindalyn Adams said Mayhew also claims to own office furniture used in the building the day of the 1963 assassination and work ledgers signed by Oswald.

"Although we're not collecting artifacts for this exhibit, I thought the window certainly belongs in the building," Mrs. Adams said. "But he (Mayhew) said he would have to sell these things."

Money is a sensitive issue.

Although it was formed almost two years ago, the foundation is just now gearing up for its first fund-raising drive. The group plans to solicit contributions from corporations first, then expand the effort to the public.

"It's just up to us now to mount an organized campaign, and I have no doubt people will support this," Mrs. Adams said.

To ensure a profitable campaign, the foundation has hired Terry McCullough Productions Inc. of Dallas to produce a slide-audio show describing the proposed exhibit. The short film will cost about $10,000, Mrs. Adams said.

Titled *One November Day* — also the name of the proposed exhibit — the slide show notes that Dallas cannot escape history.

"There is a natural reluctance to dwell on tragic times," the narrator will intone. "But history cannot be denied. And Dallas has a chance to chronicle that fateful day as no other city can."

Originally projected to be open by late 1985, the exhibit is now at least a year away from opening.

"It's no one's fault but my own," Mrs. Adams said. "I've had so many other projects going on. But I think we're really making progress now."

BRIEFS....No, you didn't miss an issue; this is #23, the followup to May #22. I kept putting off the July issue to include the latest on the Moorman photo, but there were several small delays and then a fascinating discovery: a new, clearer version of the picture! If it is rated an arbitrary 10, the previous copy is a 7 and the first blowup from issue 3 is a 4. Computer analysis of both prints is continuing, but an obnoxious newspaper has forced me to put a news blackout on all details. When the story does break, the wire services will get the information and NBC will have the best coverage of all....Henry Hurt's book "Reasonable Doubt" will be in bookstores the second week of December; publisher Holt, Rhinehart & Winston is being sold by owner CBS....UPI, which owns the Nix and Muchmore assassination films, is in bankruptcy proceedings and will soon be sold; one of the bidders was identified as a longtime, former CIA man....On the very day Billie Sol Estes' testimony changed Texas history, he was arrested for allegedly twice raping his 38 year old Mexican housekeeper 18 days earlier; he was indicted 9-6. As Coverups readers know, Estes refused to answer when a juror asked if LBJ was involved in the JFK assassination; in fact, RFK may have known of LBJ's part in the Marshall murder - was that the motive for horrible revenge by Johnson?....For those who believe Nazi involvement in the JFK killing, the chairman of a Senate panel investigating Josef Mengele was Arlen Specter, Chief Counsel to the Warren Commission; also, three members of the medical team that examined the Mengele remains were on the HSCA Forensic Pathology Panel....Looking for the front door of the Carousel Club? It's in a back room at Sol's Turf Bar across the street - you might mention it at a slow party.

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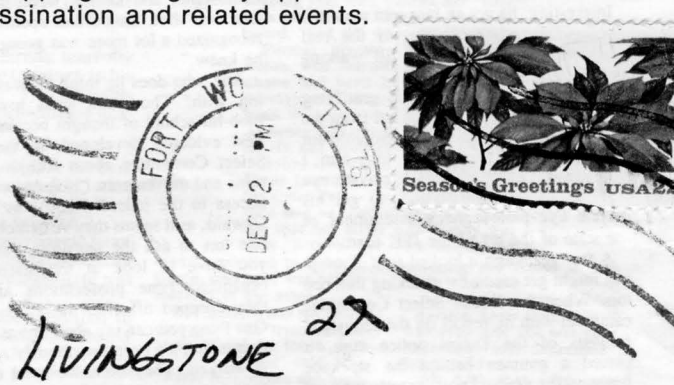

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